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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TWO LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

MAY 31, 1848,

BY

WILLIAM EATON, JR.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C.

PUBLISHED BY EDWARD J. HALE.

1848.

Philanthropic Hall, August 8th, 1848.

SIR :

The undersigned have the honor to express to you, in behalf of the Philanthropic Society, their grateful thanks for your very interesting and eloquent Address, delivered before the two Literary Societies of the University on the day preceding the Annual Commencement, and earnestly request a copy for publication.

With great respect,

Your obedient servants,

T. M. ARRINGTON,
J. DE B. MALLETT, } *Committee.*
C. R. THOMAS,

WILLIAM EATON, JR , ESQ.

Warrenton, August 12th, 1848.

GENTLEMEN :

I have received your note of the 8th instant, requesting for publication a copy of the Address delivered by myself on the day preceding the last Annual Commencement at Chapel Hill. While I am conscious that the Society by which you have been appointed a committee to make this request has too favorably estimated the Address, I have still felt it my duty to comply with established usage upon occasions of the kind. Permit me to return to the Philanthropic Society, through you as its committee, my grateful thanks for this mark of its favorable opinion; and accept, yourselves, my acknowledgments for the courteous terms in which you have been pleased to communicate its wishes.

With great esteem,

Your friend and fellow member,

WM. EATON, JR.

MESSRS. T. M. ARRINGTON, }
J. DE B. MALLETT, } *Committee, &c.*
C. R. THOMAS,

A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN OF THE DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES—

IN appearing before you on this deeply interesting occasion, I am sensible of my inability to discharge the duty assigned me, with those captivating graces of oratory which have distinguished the efforts of my predecessors. I have been induced, however, to accept the invitation with which I have been honored, from a sincere desire to gratify the wishes of that esteemed Literary Society which has made me its representative here, however humble the tribute which I may be able to bring to this temple of learning. The topic to which your attention is solicited for a few moments, is the literary prospects of our beloved country. Foreign criticism has often observed that our literature does not admit of comparison with that of the most enlightened nations of Europe, in the number, variety, and excellence of its productions. We are not so far blinded by national prejudice or vanity as to deny the truth of the remark, but there is certainly no inferiority of intellect on the part of our countrymen. It would have been a subject which might well excite surprise, if America, under existing circumstances, could have aspired to a literary rivalry with Great Britain or France, or could have risen to commanding eminence in science or letters. If we were to ask one of our transatlantic kindred, who were the brightest ornaments of the literature of his country, he would point to Shakspeare, to Milton, and to the brilliant constellation of geniuses that adorned

the literary firmament of Great Britain during the reign of Queen Anne. Coming down to a more recent period, he would probably mention, with proud satisfaction, the illustrious names of Johnson, Burke, and many others who flourished about the time of the American Revolution. When Shakespeare and Milton wrote their immortal productions, our country was almost entirely in the possession of beasts of prey and Indian tribes. During the reign of Anne, which has been regarded as the Augustan age of British learning, we had only three colleges, very poorly endowed, and exceedingly deficient in all the means of instruction, and scarcely a single press on this side of the Ocean. A few spots of imperfect cultivation might be seen on the Atlantic coast, but the axe and the ploughshare had never asserted their dominion among the stately forests of the interior. Our country was still an almost unbroken wilderness. Her noblest rivers were only skimmed by the frail bark of the savage, and her lakes and inland seas were sleeping "in the primeval silence of nature." Even at the commencement of the Revolution our population was somewhat less than three millions. That population was scattered over an extended tract of territory, was struggling with the difficulties incident to the recent settlement of the country, and was very imperfectly supplied with the means of intellectual improvement. A people so situated could not be expected to explore the depths of science or to gather the garlands of the Muses. The diligent and successful cultivation of polite literature was still more impracticable during the mighty tempest of the Revolution itself. One species of literature might have been expected from the struggle for independence: eloquence of a high order; and such was displayed in our deliberative assemblies and in the political publications of that day. Henry's bold and commanding oratory would have reflected no discredit upon the ancient republics. The memorials and other state papers of the period under review, were honored by the high eulogy of Chatham and Burke. They have been justly admired for force of argument, chaste, manly, and dignified eloquence, and fervid patriotism. They contain rich treasures of political wisdom, and noble lessons of civil liberty.

After the dark and troubled night of the Revolution had passed away, the attention of our gifted men was for many years devoted almost entirely to the improvement of our infant institutions, and to the service of our country in legislative, executive, and judicial stations, during the critical and trying season of her early independence. She needed the efforts of her ablest sons, for the peace of 1783 found her exhausted by the havoc and desolation of a seven years' war; overwhelmed by debt both private and public, and with an inadequate revenue, a crippled commerce, a deranged currency, and an exceedingly defective system of government. The writings of our eminent statesmen during this era of our history are highly distinguished for vigor of thought, profound knowledge of the subjects discussed, and excellence of composition, and prove beyond all doubt that their authors might have enriched and embellished the literature of the age by the productions of their genius, if patriotism and duty had not summoned them to other fields of fame. The pen of Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, or Ames, might, under different circumstances, have produced historical performances, to compare favorably with the labors of Gibbon, Robertson, or Hume. During every stage of our existence as a people, most of our able men have been lured from the paths of letters to the theatre of public or professional life. It is believed, however, that literary pursuits will be more favorably appreciated when our rapidly growing country shall afford a fairer field to the scholar and brighter rewards to works of merit.

An opinion has prevailed among many foreigners, and has been adopted by some enlightened and patriotic citizens of our own country, that the United States will never become eminent as regards literary fame. We propose very briefly to review some of the more prominent reasons which have been advanced by persons of talents and information in support of this opinion, which is so well calculated to wound our national pride.

It has been frequently observed that America furnishes no materials for poetry and romance. Our origin is of such recent date when compared with that of other nations equally

powerful, that our history has less variety of incident, and has been less obscured by the mists of fable and tradition, than that of many nations of the old world ; and for these reasons it may be as yet somewhat less susceptible of the embellishments of fancy and fiction, than it would have been under other circumstances, and will be hereafter. But the story of the past is by no means dull and spiritless. American history, from the time when the fleet of Columbus first spread its canvass to the breeze on the coast of Spain until the achievement of our national independence, will be read with a deep and lively interest on both sides of the Atlantic. Our country during this period exhibited scenes, incidents, and characters, entirely novel and peculiar, and opened a wide and various field for real and for fictitious narrative. The manners, habits, and customs of that extraordinary and ill-fated race, the aborigines of America ; the character of the colonists themselves, those adventurous pioneers in the mighty wilderness of the West ; the deadly conflicts between the Indian tribes and the European emigrants ; the devastating war between the crowns of Great Britain and France for supremacy in North America, which terminated in the surrender of Canada by the latter power, particularly the defeat of Braddock, the tragedy of Fort William Henry, and the siege of Quebec ; and above all, the heroic achievements of the Revolutionary contest, present "mines of literary treasure," themes for the "spirit-stirring song and the chivalrous story." Surely works of imagination might be wrought by a man of genius out of materials like these. We need not look to Europe for all of the subjects of poetical or prose fiction, rich as she is in historical reminiscences and in legendary tales. Fields of fancy, brightened with verdure and fragrant with flowers, may be found on this side of the broad Atlantic. Cooper, by the exciting incidents and the glowing descriptions of the beauties of nature to be found in his American novels, has proved that a writer of romance will hazard nothing by laying the scene of his story in these bright regions of the West. The wild and picturesque scenery of America, unequalled by that of Europe in extended and lofty ranges of mountains, majestic streams and noble catar-

acts, the thrilling events of our early and indeed our recent history, and the striking features of the American character, will afford various and abundant materials for national literature. Nor will American authors be restricted to the scenes, events, or characters of their native land, although most of them would be apt to prefer topics which awaken a peculiar and local interest at home. British genius has not confined its flights to the shores of Albion. Addison sung the charms of immortal Italy. Byron, when a young man, resided in Greece, and it has been truly observed by Macaulay, that much of his most splendid and most popular poetry was inspired by its scenery and its history. Campbell did not regard America as unworthy of song, and places the scene of one of his sweetest poems upon the verdant and beautiful banks of the Susquehanna. The author of *Waverley*, the prince of modern novelists, has not only rendered Scotland classic soil, and erected enduring trophies in England, but he has gathered green wreaths of fame from the "vine-clad hills" of France, from the mountains of Switzerland, and from the valley of the Rhine. He has even passed beyond the limits of Europe, and rendered the holy land itself tributary to his renown. Other instances might be mentioned of British writers who have signalized their talents on foreign ground, and among them Shakspeare himself, many of whose best plays have been wrought out of foreign materials, and the elegant historians Robertson and Gibbon.

The language which we speak, our national descent, and our commercial relations with Great Britain, have been alleged to be unfavorable to originality in the productions of genius, and it has been apprehended that our American writers will occupy the position of mere imitators, who will only shine in borrowed jewels from abroad. It ought not to be a subject of regret in any point of view that we speak the language of Addison and Pope, and enjoy the benefits and blessings of a liberal and enriching commerce with the most enlightened nation of the old world. The United States ought to be entirely and perfectly independent of Great Britain, so far as foreign influence in matters of government and political power are concerned, as she undoubtedly is; but national independence

and a just national pride do not forbid our people from admiring the truths of her philosophy, the eloquence of her orators, or the beauty of her bards. It is fortunate for our countrymen that they have an opportunity to drink deeply at the pure, refreshing, and invigorating fountains of British learning, wisdom, and genius. Our mother tongue has been adorned by many of the noblest productions of the human mind in almost every department of composition, and with American readers their beauties are not dimmed by translation or by an imperfect knowledge of the language of the original. The literature of Great Britain places before young America high standards of excellence both in prose and poetry, and it is calculated to engender feelings of noble emulation. That literature has exercised an elevating influence upon the mind, the morals, and the taste of the British nation. Its influences and effects have been and will be equally auspicious and favorable within our own precincts. Surely nothing which improves the intellect, refines the taste, and elevates and purifies the moral feelings and sentiments of a people, can be really detrimental to the interests of their native literature. If there be much of force in the argument which we have endeavored to meet, Britons themselves, as well as Americans, must hereafter be imitators; the career of every nation which has already become renowned in letters must be a downward career, and the best libraries will be unfavorable to future excellence in the productions of the mind. We may have some writers whose works will be cold and imitative, and who may draw rather too freely upon the mental treasures of England, but we trust that their feeble efforts will not be considered to be fair specimens of American literature. A man of a high order of talents will profit by the labors of others, but, proudly conscious of his native strength, he will not become the mere copyist of any author, however illustrious. Some of our recent productions have exhibited that superiority of intellect which proves, if any evidence were necessary, that American genius can safely rely upon its own powers, without descending to the task of servile imitation. Whence did Irving borrow that inimitable elegance which renders his lighter productions as well as his more labored

performances the delight of every reader? Whom did Bancroft imitate in the bold sketches of his vivid pencil, and his eloquent and animated narrative? After what model did Prescott fashion in the formation of his simple, yet dignified, easy, and beautiful style? These three writers have passed triumphantly through the ordeal of European criticism. Irving's *Life of Columbus*, Bancroft's *History of the United States*, and all of the histories written by Prescott, stand among the very best historical performances of the present age; and they certainly display those striking peculiarities of style and sentiment which are so apt to mark the offspring of true genius. While we have spoken in favorable terms of the general effects of British literature in the United States, we are well aware that there are some of its influences against which American readers ought to be on their guard. The partialities of British writers towards their own institutions render them unsafe guides to us in matters relating to political science, and some of their most admired historical writings have not been distinguished for justice and candor. It must be admitted, too, that the British press, now prolific beyond all former example, is constantly throwing off numerous works of fiction, many of which are entirely worthless, and others evidently calculated to enervate the mind, vitiate the taste, and deprave the moral principles. You should never abandon the standard literature of Great Britain for these frivolous and mischievous productions. You will find the sublime song of Milton, the charming melody of Pope, the classic purity of Addison, the chaste beauties of Goldsmith, the rich treasures of the moral wisdom of Johnson, and the pure, instructive and fascinating stories of Scott, much more worthy of your attention than the last novels and romances which are now flooding our country.

Among other causes supposed to be unfavorable to the growth of letters in America, it has been said that we have no great capital like England or France. We certainly have no London or Paris on this side of the Atlantic, and in this respect we labor under some disadvantages, especially as regards the elegant arts and several branches of science and philosophy; but it is not admitted that these disadvantages are as great as

some have alleged. New York, the great and growing metropolis of the Western World, has at this time more inhabitants than Vienna, and is probably surpassed by no city in England except London, in population, wealth, commerce, and magnificence. Philadelphia is very nearly as populous as Glasgow or Dublin, more so than any city in Spain, or indeed any in France with the exception of Paris itself. So far as the influence of large cities is concerned in promoting the advancement of the arts and of letters, our difficulties must diminish with the lapse of time. Our rapidly increasing trade, and our unrivalled facilities of internal communication both by land and water, must exert the most auspicious effect upon the cities of the United States. These cities must greatly advance in population and wealth, as well as in intelligence, refinement and taste. Our country may not for generations behold any thing within her limits equal to some of the ancient and proud capitals of the Eastern Hemisphere; but she certainly will have many cities sufficiently large, populous and wealthy to become nurseries of the fine arts, to afford to men of science an opportunity to prosecute their researches to advantage, and to stimulate and reward literary talent. Before the expiration of any considerable period of time the United States must have many cities as populous as Edinburgh, the great focus of Scotch taste, science and learning, and a place almost as famous in letters as London itself. The literary institutions of Germany have acquired a high and enviable reputation, and have surpassed those of England and France in a profound and accurate knowledge of the ancient classics. That country has been called the land of scholars. In relation to the opportunities of improvement afforded by large towns, Germany has now no great advantage over the United States, and in a few years will have no advantage at all. In some respects large cities were more essential to literature in ancient than in modern times. Among the Greeks and Romans books were rare and not easy to be procured. Copies were multiplied slowly and with great difficulty. Valuable libraries were rarely to be found except in places of considerable importance. Much of the information of those days was communicated

orally, and was never placed in a permanent and enduring form. These are some of the reasons why the learned among the ancients were so much in the habit of resorting to imperial Rome and classic Athens to prosecute their studies and to enlarge their knowledge. But the art of printing, in its present high state of improvement, and the steam engine, have contributed greatly to the diffusion of letters. Literature in modern times finds its way not only into the splendid capital and the crowded mart, but also into the inland village, and even among the silent shades of rural retirement.

It has been said that a stronger national government would have been favorable to the culture of letters. From this opinion we entirely dissent. Ancient Greece has been called "a cluster of little republics," and her literary excellence has been attributed in a considerable degree to the noble emulation which fired the bosoms of her distinguished men. There were certainly feebler ties of connection among the Grecian States before they wore the chains of Macedonia, than there are among the members of the American Union. The Confederacy of Grecian Republics, associated together under the Amphycionian Council, the most intimate political relationship that ever existed between them in the days of their freedom and glory, has been very properly compared by the author of the **Federalist* to the old Confederation of the American States. The federal features of our beautiful system are highly favorable to virtue, liberty and happiness, and they will exert no unpropitious influence upon the intellect of America. The interests of virtue, liberty and letters are entirely inseparable, as they always have been in every age and in every region of the world. Emulation among neighboring States will here become an incentive to exertion and the parent of excellence, as it certainly was in the ancient cradle of the arts. During the bloody battles of our recent war, the regiments of the different States felt the inspiring influence of a generous and manly rivalry. In the victories of peace, more mild but not less glorious than the triumphs of the field, in the rapid improvement of our

* *Federalist*, page 79.

country, and in costly and liberal provisions for the education of the poor, the same auspicious influences of State competition have been felt among the various members of our happy Union. Similar feelings and sentiments will exert a salutary effect upon American science and literature. If the States of our Confederacy were melted down into one common mass, if the lines which mark their limits were blotted from the map altogether, or were regarded as of no more importance than mere county boundaries, so that the traveller would scarcely pause to inquire when he left the Empire State and when he passed into Pennsylvania, the scholar would have as little reason as the statesman to rejoice over the ruins of our temple of freedom.

The monarchists of the old world have remarked that our republican institutions will never afford that patronage to learning which is requisite to its successful cultivation. The American author cannot expect to enjoy the smiles of court favor, or to bask in the sunbeams of princely patronage. He must rely upon his own merit and the public intelligence. No munificent pension can be expected as the meed of literary excellence, however shining and distinguished. The national government has no power upon the subject of literature, but simply to grant copyrights, and if the State governments have the power to patronize works of genius by generous pecuniary donations, it is a power which they will probably never exercise. Indeed, we do not regard such patronage as being within the sphere of a wise and judicious policy. The American States ought always to secure to their people the very best systems of popular instruction, and also to provide for their youth seminaries of learning of the first class, where a complete, thorough and finished education may be acquired. Many of the States have already manifested a wise and enlightened liberality upon this subject, and others will probably emulate their bright example. But the reading public is the proper tribunal to decide upon the merits of a poem, a history, or any other literary performance, and to consign its author to the shades of oblivion, or to bestow upon him the appropriate rewards of fame and profit. Public patronage will be dispensed with more justice and impartiality, and more sagacity and dis-

crimination, than that of princes or rulers of any kind. What mighty results has patronage from government to illustrious writers accomplished for the cause of literature in ancient or modern times? The land of Homer and Sophocles was but little indebted to such aid for the admirable productions of its intellect. The author of the *Iliad* is not much known to the moderns except through the medium of his poetry. It is believed, however, that he was both poor and blind. The rewards which were sometimes bestowed in Greece upon happy efforts of genius in composition, by public authority, were merely honorary, such for instance as a crown or a garland to the author of the best comedy or tragedy. The entertainments of the stage were a source of serious expense to the Athenians, but this expense was incurred in extraordinary theatrical pomp and decoration and exquisite music, and not in any pecuniary compensation from the treasury to the writers of the best dramatic performances. Pericles had more just claims to the character of a patron of genius than any statesman of his country. When at the height of his power and his fame, he embellished the city of Athens with costly, elegant and durable buildings, and with splendid specimens of painting and sculpture, but we are not informed that he bestowed any considerable encouragement upon that noble literature which has survived her finest architecture, and which still flourishes in unfading beauty when

“the pale ivy’s clasping wreaths o’ershade
The ruined temple’s moss-clad colonnade.”

The classic land owes much more to liberty than to patronage, so far as its renown in letters is concerned.

It may be doubted whether the literary fame of ancient Rome was very materially advanced by the smiles of power. The patronage of Cæsar Augustus and his favorite Mæcenæ has been greatly extolled, but even that in some respects exercised an influence unfavorable to Roman literature. It certainly caused Virgil and Horace to degrade their noble genius by the most extravagant adulation of the Roman Emperor.

How far the Imperial Augustus was a proper subject for high-wrought and glowing panegyric, we can best discern, when we remember that he was nothing more than a successful usurper, and that in order to purchase power he bartered away the life of the great statesman, patriot and orator, who, "after having baffled the conspiracy of Catiline, enabled Rome to contend with Athens for the palm of eloquence." The orations of Cicero, which many have regarded as the purest and brightest gems of Italy, were the proud offspring of the republic. The voice of eloquence was hushed on the banks of the Tiber, as it had been previously in Greece, after the downfall of freedom. The poets who flourished during the Augustan age, and who have given such splendor and eclat to that epoch, would probably have composed their excellent works if Rome had retained her popular institutions, and they might have manifested a spirit more worthy of the countrymen of Cato.

The literature of Great Britain is indebted for its brilliant success, not to the smiles of kings or the favor of ministers, but to its own intrinsic excellence, and to the taste, intelligence and liberality of the nation itself. The great fathers of British literature were honored by no munificence from the throne. Shakspeare went down to the grave unrewarded, and the author of *Paradise Lost* spent the sad evening of his blind and venerable old age in poverty and neglect. Butler and Dryden, as we are informed by Hume, lived and died in want. During subsequent periods in the English annals, how often do we find genius neglected by the great, but cherished and fostered by the public, and flourishing under the genial rays of its favor. In the long list of sovereigns who have swayed the sceptre of proud Albion, how many are there who stand on the page of impartial history as liberal patrons of literature? Royal bounty, even when bestowed at all, has rarely cheered an author of merit in his early struggles with adversity and indigence, and pensions from the crown have been generally withheld until the individual has to a considerable extent established his fortune and his fame by his own exertions. The most ample, the most seasonable, and in every

respect the best encouragement, which has ever been extended in England to productions of genius and taste, has been that of the booksellers and the public at large. This kind of patronage exerts a more salutary influence than that of government, or even that of illustrious and powerful individuals, and contributes much more to advance the dignity and happiness of a literary life. If a necessity ever existed for government patronage in Great Britain, the number of readers is now so large that it certainly exists no longer. In the language of the poet,

“Pensions bestowed where no Apollo fires
Are vain,—superfluous if his breath inspires.”

An author of talents and reputation may now live in England independently and comfortably upon the productions of his pen. Many have acquired competency, and some affluence, by the profits of their works. A man of letters is now relieved from degrading dependence, and need not violate his feelings of self-respect or sink his personal pride, by obsequiously soliciting the countenance and support of some powerful patron. He is not expected to court the favor of the great by flattery, as too many once did, but to merit the approbation of the public by literary excellence. Government patronage is certainly unfavorable to literary independence, and to the accuracy and impartiality of history.

None of the reasons which have been mentioned as obstacles to the intellectual advancement of America appear to us to be sufficient to prevent the United States from hereafter rising to distinction and eminence in letters. Our nation as regards age is still in its infancy. It has been only sixty-five years since our independence was recognized by the parent country, and but little more than two centuries since the commencement of our national existence. Many of the causes which have heretofore retarded the growth of American literature are destined to be of temporary duration, and its prospects must improve and brighten as our country advances in her rapid career. Her past progress in population, re-

sources and power, resembles the visions of romance more than the realities of history. When American independence was acknowledged it was scarcely imagined that our territorial limits would ever extend beyond the Mississippi, nor was it very probable that the United States would ever acquire the control over that great channel of communication; but the "ocean stream," compared with which the Thames, "the river of the ten thousand masts," dwindles into a rivulet, now rolls on in its grandeur through the heart of our country. Our national domain is washed by the billows of the Atlantic and the Pacific. It is indeed a noble country, with its fertile soil and genial skies, its almost interminable line of coast, abounding in the best harbors, its long, deep and navigable rivers, and its broad and beautiful lakes. It is a widely extended, lovely and fruitful land, capable of sustaining in comfort an immense number of inhabitants, and of supplying the wants of Europe from its overflowing abundance. The population of the United States, which during the year 1790 amounted to something less than four millions, may now be estimated at twenty-two millions, an increase unparalleled in the history of mankind; and in the course of another half century, no long period in the life of a nation, it will in all human probability exceed one hundred millions of souls. The population of this country must at some future time amount to several hundred millions. Our people are, in general, distinguished for intelligence; and in perseverance, energy and enterprise, they are nowhere surpassed. What may not be expected from such a country, and such a population, and from the vivifying influence of American freedom? Our literary and scientific institutions, many of them already of high standing and extensive usefulness, must greatly improve with the growing fortunes of our country. They must be more liberally patronized, and must shed around them a brighter radiance and a more cheering light. The number of intelligent, well educated and reading men in the United States must be immensely increased, and the rewards of literary merit will be proportionably augmented. The American author, through the medium of his writings, will address a large and noble audience of his

own countrymen, he will address them in their mother tongue, and not unfrequently upon topics of the deepest national interest. He will have as strong incentives to animate him in the pursuit of glory, and to call into action his highest powers, as have ever been presented to the ambition of any writer in ancient or modern times, and as brilliant rewards will crown his success. The spontaneous patronage of the public, which we trust we have shown to be the best kind of literary patronage, but which during the greater part of our history has been entirely inadequate, owing to our sparse population and other causes, will in progress of time become liberal and munificent. And when the American author shall have reached the high distinction to which he has aspired, his works will commend themselves to the attention of Europe. The eastern sky is now dawning, with radiant light, and the march of freedom and reform on the other side of the Atlantic has been rapid and unparalleled. Recent revolutions will be favorable even to the literary prospects of America. The model republic is constantly gaining more and more the attention and respect of mankind as their institutions improve, and as she herself advances onward in the fulfillment of her high destinies. The old world must contemplate with a deep and increasing interest every thing which relates to her history, her institutions, and her literature. American writings are beginning to be more highly esteemed abroad. Some of our very recent productions have been already translated into the French, German, Italian, and Spanish languages. Our national writers, with such advantages, such incentives, and such prospects, cannot be doomed to inferiority to those of Europe. American intellect is certainly equal to that of the Eastern World, as has been triumphantly proved by our splendid success in war, statesmanship, jurisprudence, and the mechanic arts, and by forensic and senatorial eloquence of the highest merit. Heretofore political and professional pursuits, and other employments of active life, have drawn into their vortex the best talents of America. But as other paths of fame become more and more thronged, and the rewards and honors of authorship increase, as they certainly must in a very

high degree, the national mind will take a more literary direction, and the dignified pursuits of letters will be more justly appreciated. The high degree of civil liberty enjoyed by the people of the United States will be eminently favorable to the full development of their intellectual energies. Liberty has every where been the friend of genius. Flowers of fancy may be more easily culled on American soil when our country grows older, and richer in romantic association. Time will lend an attractive interest to the events of our past history, and render them more fruitful and inspiring themes for our native muses. The national pride of our countrymen will cause them to bestow a liberal encouragement upon our own works of merit. The people of the United States are justly sensitive to the attacks of European criticism upon our national literature, and they must be anxious to elevate the fame of America. No enlightened patriot can feel indifferent upon this subject. A home literature such as America ought hereafter to produce would purify our national taste, elevate the sentiments of our people, and brighten the golden links that bind the patriot to the land of his birth. It would exalt the reputation of our country abroad, and with posterity, more than the most heroic achievements of the crimsoned field. How little should we have known of the most renowned states of antiquity but for the immortal productions of their orators, their historians, and their poets. These imperishable memorials of ancient genius and glory are destined to instruct and delight the most distant generations. Centuries as they have rolled away, crumbling beneath them the monuments of art and the proud trophies of arms, have only contributed to establish and elevate the fame of the great writers of antiquity. The Greek and Roman classics have been studied and admired in every age and in every land where mankind have been able to appreciate the grand and beautiful in composition. To suppose a time in the history of the world when these finished models of taste shall be forgotten, would be to anticipate the arrival of a period compared with which the sombre gloom of the dark ages would be a golden flood of light.

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS—

You have now completed your collegiate education, and you are about to commence your career upon the active drama of life. I have been placed in the same position which you now occupy, and know well how to appreciate the feelings which animate your hearts. You have looked forward to the interesting occasion which was to relieve you from the restraints of college life, and allow to you the absolute disposal of your time, with high and exciting hopes. It has often been the subject of your youthful day-dreams and of the bright visions of your fancy. It has often been the favorite topic of your social hours. You have fondly looked forward to the present annual Commencement as a period of unmingled joy without one cloud of care. The occasion certainly brings along with it high gratifications, interesting reminiscences of the past, and cheering hopes of future felicity. Future life, unseen except by the imagination, and entirely untried, now brightens before you in all its richest charms. The prospect must be an agreeable one of a speedy meeting with dear friends and affectionate kindred, and of revisiting the parental hearth and the home of your infancy, that asylum which has been rendered sacred by the best and purest feelings of the heart. But the fairest scenes of earthly felicity are sometimes tinged with shades of sadness. When you bid adieu to your esteemed and respected preceptors, who have guided your footsteps in the paths of virtue, science and learning, whose duties may sometimes have required them to oppose your inclinations, but who always consulted your good, and whose labors will ever be remembered with affectionate gratitude ;—when you bid a long, perhaps an eternal farewell to your friends and fellow-students, the beloved and cherished companions of your youth, who have prosecuted the same improving studies and shared the same delightful amusements, who have heightened all your joys and softened your sorrows, and whose bosoms have been warmed by sympathies entirely congenial to your own ;—when you take your leave of this venerable seat of learning, and the shades of its beautiful and classic grove, endeared by

memory's richest treasures and by a thousand associations of the past, scenes among which you have whiled away so many pleasant, so many happy hours, and have spent so much of the "dewy morning of life,"—you will find your sensibilities awakened, and feelings at once tender and pensive springing up in your breasts. Wherever you may go, or whatever may be your destiny, fond recollection will linger among these cherished objects. Amid the pleasures and pursuits of subsequent life, its calamities and its cares, you will turn with unalienated affection to this lovely and sequestered spot, where

"The hills and flowers and streams
Are woven o'er with golden dreams."

Fancy will often bring before you the familiar faces of your early friends and companions. Happy, thrice happy will you be, if you shall find among the associates of your manhood the purity, tenderness, and fervor of your juvenile friendships.

My return to this hallowed spot of my youthful studies and enjoyments has been a source of high though not unalloyed satisfaction. Some sad recollections shade the bright picture which memory presents. More than one-fourth of the class with which I graduated, now sleep beneath the sod of the valley, and that venerable apostle of science from whose hands we received our diplomas, has since gone down to the tomb. The early grave of blooming and promising youth suddenly cut down by the scythe of death, must ever excite the most tender and melancholy sensations ; but the friends of the departed father of this University need not sorrow over the monument which covers his remains.

"Weep not for him, who closed with placid ray
The tranquil evening of a well-spent day,
And, all life's honors earned, its duties done,
Sank in full radiance, like a cloudless sun."

The students of this institution have frequently been addressed upon occasions like the present by gentlemen of talents and of high distinction, from whose lips you have heard the precepts of virtue and the lessons of wisdom recommended

by all the charms of eloquence. No admonitions of mine can merit the same serious consideration, or be calculated to produce an impression equally strong and vivid. My solicitude, however, for your future welfare, must excuse a few suggestions, which, if duly remembered in after life, may not be entirely destitute of some good effect. Few, very few are the persons in North Carolina who have been blessed with the superior opportunities of intellectual improvement which you have enjoyed, at least when we look at her entire population. The well-educated youths of the State ought to be impressed with a high sense of the importance and responsibility of their position in society. North Carolina must rely upon her most enlightened sons to sustain her reputation abroad, and advance her best and dearest interests at home. They should not be insensible to the suggestions of patriotism and a becoming State pride, nor disregard the wishes of that honored mother. She has a right to expect most from those who have enjoyed the best opportunities of mental improvement, and who are most able to render her brilliant and useful service. Those of you who reside beyond the borders of North Carolina, and it affords me pleasure to be able to say that every graduating class contains young men from a distance, will doubtless feel under obligations equally strong and imperative towards your native States.

Be not hasty, however, to embark in political pursuits. A premature commencement of public life is certainly unfriendly to the prosecution of literary and professional studies, and is sometimes fraught with perilous consequences to the morals of our young men. Let the ambitious youth have a little patience. He should be content to remain in the shade of retirement for a few years, in order that his talents and acquirements may shine in the legislative councils of his country with a brighter lustre and a more genial warmth. Let him wait until his character has been formed, his habits of virtue, morality and industry firmly fixed, his intellect sufficiently cultivated, strengthened and adorned, and his knowledge enlarged. Let him check his desire for preferment until he has become thoroughly acquainted with the history, the institutions, and the varied

interests of his country. He will thus bring into the public councils more moral and intellectual strength, and more dignity of character; brighter displays of talent, and greater capacities for usefulness. He may not rise so speedily in the political world, but he will at last gain for himself a more enviable distinction, and establish a fairer title to the public gratitude. A feverish thirst for political fame in early life has rendered many of our leading men mere sciolists in literary and scientific attainment. When engaged in the service of your country, you will find in the characters of many of the departed statesmen of the republic, as examples for your imitation, the most beautiful models of disinterested and devoted patriotism, unbending firmness, and spotless purity, models not surpassed by those of antiquity. If you should pursue the noiseless tenor of your way among the peaceful shades of domestic retirement, even in that secluded situation a man of intelligence and worth may accomplish much good. He may set an example of probity for the imitation of others, impart a healthier tone to public sentiment in the circle around him, lend his influence to the cause of social order, and purify the moral atmosphere of society by the sweet incense of his virtues.

Probably some of you may devote your time and attention to the liberal professions. If so, never rest satisfied with a dull mediocrity, but press forward with zeal and energy to distinction and eminence. Master the peculiar learning which belongs to the profession which you may select, however forbidding some of it may appear to minds fresh from the classics. Do not, however, bid farewell to the charms of elegant literature. Cultivated taste and literary accomplishments will adorn and dignify professional skill and talent, and afford a delightful recreation to cheer and enliven the leisure hours of the physician or the lawyer. Be not over-sanguine as to speedy success in your efforts to reach the honors and rewards of your profession, nor too easily dispirited by those disappointments and difficulties which many of the most gifted and eminent men have had to encounter in the commencement of their career.

In every situation of human life, and in every relation of society, you should discharge all of your duties with scrupu-

lous fidelity. Endeavor to form a character which shall command universal respect, and present to the shafts of calumny an impenetrable shield. Let high honor, inflexible integrity, and ingenuous frankness, distinguish your conduct at all times. Abstain from every act as to the moral propriety of which the least difference of opinion can be fairly entertained among men of understanding and worth. The honor of a gentleman, like a soldier's courage, should be very far beyond suspicion. Let your morals be pure and unexceptionable. Shun not only odious and disreputable vices, but also those which may be tolerated by the public sentiment of the neighborhood in which you may reside, and which are apt to present more dangerous allurements to the young. Practice the virtues of temperance, moderation, and strict self-control. Amiability of disposition and urbanity in your social intercourse will be equally essential to your usefulness in society, and your own happiness. Be careful in the selection of your intimate associates, and faithful to your friends, particularly in their adversity. Cultivate feelings of generous benevolence towards your fellow man of every color and every condition. Sad would be human existence if the sorrows of afflicted humanity should find no cheering sympathy in the breasts of the intelligent, the educated, and the refined. Let all of the influence which you may be able to exercise in society, be exerted for purposes which are dear to the patriot, the philanthropist, and the Christian. In conclusion, my young friends, permit me to express my anxious desire for your future welfare and happiness. May your ways be "ways of pleasantness," and all your paths be peace.





